

1. An apparatus for sending a message to a wireless device over a wireless network, the apparatus comprising:

a gateway for receiving the message transmitted over an external network in communication with the gateway, the message including an expiration instruction and expiration information indicating a time after which the message is not to be delivered to the wireless device, for attempting to deliver the message to the wireless device over the wireless network, and for carrying out the expiration instruction by deleting the message at the time indicated by the expiration information.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the gateway comprises a database for storing the message.

3. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the database has a directory structure for associating the wireless device with the message.

4. The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the gateway flags the message in the database with the expiration information and executes a protocol to determine when the flagged expiration information matches a time indicated by the gateway.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the gateway transmits the message to the external network at the time indicated by the expiration information.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the expiration information indicates a length of time before the gateway carries out the expiration instruction.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the expiration information indicates a date and time for the gateway to carry out the expiration instruction.

8. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the message is a text message.

9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the expiration instruction and expiration information are included in the text message.

10. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the expiration instruction and expiration information are in a header of the message.

11. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the external network is the Internet.

12. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the wireless device is a pager.

13. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the gateway attempts to deliver the message to the wireless device over the wireless network at a predetermined time.

14. A method of sending a message to a user of a wireless device over a wireless network, the method comprising:

- sending a message including an expiration instruction and expiration information indicating a time after which the message is not to be delivered to the wireless device;
- attempting to deliver the message to the wireless device over the wireless network; and
- deleting the message at the time indicated by the expiration information.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising

- returning the message to a source external to the wireless network.

16. The method of claim 14, wherein message is a text message, and the expiration instruction and expiration information are included in the message.

17. The method of claim 14, wherein the expiration instruction and expiration information are in a header of the message.

18. The method of claim 14, further comprising

- flagging the message with the expiration information; and
- carrying out the expiration instruction by comparing the flagged message with a time indicated by the wireless system.

19. The method of claim 14, further comprising  
determining whether the message has been delivered to the wireless device prior to  
deleting the message.

20. The method of claim 14, wherein the message is sent over the Internet through a  
connection to the wireless network.

21. The method of claim 14, wherein the message is attempted to be delivered to the  
wireless device over the wireless network at a predetermined time.

22. A method of sending a message to a user of a wireless device over a wireless  
network that maintains a mailbox for the user, the method comprising:  
    sending a message, which includes an expiration instruction and expiration information  
    indicating a time after which the message is not to be delivered to the wireless device, to the  
    user's mailbox;  
    flagging the message in the user's mailbox with the expiration information;  
    attempting to deliver the message in the user's mailbox to the wireless device over the  
    wireless network;  
    comparing the flagged message with a time indicated by the wireless system; and  
    deleting the message from the user's mailbox at the time indicated by the expiration  
    information.